

THE SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

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Innovations in Research and Sampling Design

A Report on the Faculty Development Programme organised by Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education from 17th to 21st May, 2021

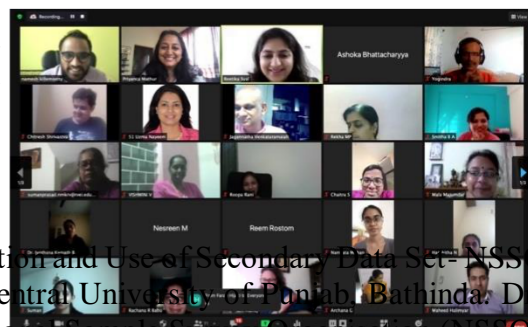
A five-day Faculty Development Programme (FDP) was organised by the Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CeRSSE), J.P. Nagar campus, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University) from 17th to 21st May, 2021. The theme of the FDP was 'Innovation in Research and Sampling Design' and the coordinators for the FDP were Dr. Priyanca Mathur, Associate Professor, and Dr. Reetika Syal, Assistant Professor, CeRSSE, JAIN. The FDP was delivered online via the zoom platform, with 92 participants who were from various universities and research institutes across India, and from various specialisations including Humanities and Social Sciences, Languages, Psychology, Management, Commerce, Sciences and Engineering. 10 technical sessions were held over five days from 2 pm to 5.30 pm.

The FDP opened on day 1, 17th May, with brief welcome and introductions by the FDP coordinators. The Vice-Chancellor of JAIN Prof. Raj Singh gave the inaugural address where he spoke about the importance and need for innovation in Higher Education. The first technical session by Dr. Deepti Swamy, Founder-Director I-dentitee LLP, Bengaluru, on 'Congruent Sampling in Multi-Approach Research' elaborated on using quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve the objectives of the study. Dr. Swamy spoke about her doctoral research work on the theme of 'Social Identity' and took the

participants through the research design, the sampling method used for it, and how the data was collected and analysed to achieve the objectives of the study. The following session was by Dr. Yogesh Mishra, an Independent Researcher in North Carolina- USA, who showcased through his doctoral research on Kashmir how to carry out ethnographic research and the importance of storytelling. He sketched the everyday life in Kashmir and how through his experiences he chose to tell the stories of the people there, and the challenges in narration.

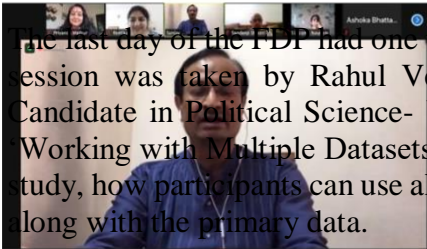
The second day started with a session on secondary data titled 'Extraction and Use of Secondary Data Set- NSSO' by Dr. Jajati Keshari Parida, Assistant Professor of Economics at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. Dr. Parida took the participants through the extraction process of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) data, and also spoke about the usage of the secondary dataset. He elaborated on the process of extraction through the STATA software, which the participants found extremely useful. The second session of the day on 'Using Mixed Methods in Interdisciplinary Analysis' was conducted by Dr. Niharika Tyagi, from The Energy Research Institute (TERI), Delhi. Dr. Tyagi took the participants through her doctoral journey to first elaborate the difference between mixed methods research and using multiple methods for research. She then illustrated the sampling, data collection methods and analysis required in a mixed methods approach through her case study of central India.

Third day of the FDP was on the theme of research in the urban areas. The two sessions were taken by Dr. Namesh Killemsetty, Assistant Professor at O.P Jindal Global University, Sonapat and Dr. Tarun Arora, Associate Manager- Research and Insights, Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, Bengaluru, respectively. Dr. Arora conducted the session on 'Conducting Systematic Urban Research' by showcasing the



Jana-Brown Citizenship Index study being carried out by his organisation, in collaboration with Brown University USA, and spoke about the challenges of mapping cities and urban areas for the purpose of sampling. He provided cases from his research to elaborate on the various challenges that the research underwent in mapping out the households to be selected for the survey. Dr. Namesh having just completed his doctoral studies from the University of Massachusetts, spoke about the 'Use of Soft-Operations Research (OR) Methods in Social Sciences Research' which he used for his thesis. The practical examples of each sampled area proved extremely helpful in visualising how Soft OR can be applied in research.

Day four started with a very interesting session on 'Research with High Achievers' presented by Dr. Guneet Inder Jit Kaur, Assistant Professor, Department of Sports Psychology, Central University of Rajasthan, where she spoke about the research she conducted on 'high achievers' in sports and academics, and the challenges she faced in sampling and data collection. This was followed by a session on 'Sampling and Data Collection in Conflict Zones and Data Collection during a Pandemic' by Manjesh Rana, Research Assistant, Lokniti- Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Manjesh took the participants through the research project of status of policing in India and he spoke at length about the sampling design challenges for selecting respondents from the Police force, especially since the study was conducted in conflict zones, and during a pandemic.



The last day of the FDP had one technical session followed by the Valedictory function. The technical session was taken by Rahul Verma, Fellow at Centre for Policy Research, Delhi, and Doctoral Candidate in Political Science- University of California, Berkley, USA. Rahul's session was titled 'Working with Multiple Datasets' and he demonstrated through the example of this doctoral research study, how participants can use already existing datasets, and secondary data available on the internet, along with the primary data.

The main takeaway from his session was the extensive data collection exercise that he undertook for his research at the panchayat, state and central government level, in four districts of Uttar Pradesh, to illustrate the prevalence of dynasty politics in the state. The valedictory session at the end of the FDP was indeed a coming together of ideas and pathways for research discussed over the previous sessions and days. Prof. Sanjay Kumar, Co-Director, Lokniti, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi was the valedictory speaker and he gave multiple examples of research and sampling designs which were used by his organisation for various studies. He also recounted his experiences over the years about how doctoral scholars are either not sure of what research design is to be used, or are too quick to finalise the sampling structure even before they have an idea of what their study area is going to be. He brought out the pitfalls of selecting the incorrect research and sampling design in a simple yet effective manner. The FDP closed with feedback from the participants about their experiences and learnings, and the vote of thanks was given by Dr. Reetika Syal.

FDP from the Participants' Lens

Research is an ever emerging domain, especially when new knowledge formation requires out of box strategies, methods and techniques. This is where faculty development programs (FDP) act as catalyst to sparkle the conventional research minds. This is so true of the recent FDP organised by CeRSSE and JAIN University, Bangalore particularly when

even the research community is to adapt to the new normal in the pandemic. When our faculty members sent us the flyer for this FDP, we jumped at the prospect to attend this programme. Having just completed a dissertation in the Masters degree, and now pursuing a Ph.D, we wanted to learn of the innovative ways in which we can pursue research. Therefore, leveraging the opportunity we got to be a part of a digital platform where resource persons shared their amazing re-



search journeys. It was almost a physical replica of the FDP programs held in the pre-pandemic days. The five-days of discussions and presentations created a deep flow for integrating major takeaways for the participants' individual research work. The most valuable take-aways were the insights brought out during the question and answer sessions taking place after the formal presentations, which provided a more personalised interaction among participants and resource persons.

Often, studies involving both Qualitative and Quantitative approaches rely on different sampling and re- search questions for each phase. So, research methodology choosing different approaches at each level while keeping sampling techniques similar provide natural validity through

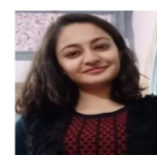


triangulation. Therefore, ‘Congruent Sampling in multi-stage approach re- search’ by Dr. Deepti Swamy, was a simple and effective way to innovate our own tools in methodology. Along with it, Dr. Niharika Tyagi’s presenta- tion on ‘Mixed Methods Research’ wherein the same research question is answered through both approaches provided an interesting and innovative way for compensating the usual tradeoff between objectivity and generalis-ability.

As researchers, we ought to be observant to draw realistic stories of entities under our study, and also for forming targeted policies. Thus, Dr. Yogesh Mishra elaborated that ‘Ethnography and Storytelling’ is more of a skill than research technique that can be of great assistance to any social science researcher. Being a research scholar in economics, it was privilege to attend Dr. Jajati K. Parida’s lecture on extracting NSSO data using Stata. These days, softwares to analyse data have made tasks a whole lot easier for synthesis and analyzing secondary data for major policy suggestions and targeted remedies. However, the contextualising of the data remains a skill for the research scholars, which no one else can fulfill. The themes discussed on the first two days proved extremely helpful in choosing the research design based on the nature of research questions.

But, is the research design explanatory, exploratory or convergent? Well, finding the correct research de- sign is not an end in itself unless the sampling design is created. Thus, the third day of the FDP was a prac- tical tour to ‘Proportionate Stratified Sampling’ (multi-stage sampling) by Dr. Tarun Arora, which proved a guide to a robust sampling frame for representative sampling. This session also made us realise a lot of dif- ferent terminologies that as voters we were not aware of earlier. Sourcing the information from different levels, when not available at any one level was a major takeaway. In research methods, the case study method is used for qualitative research and this was elaborated by Dr. Namesh K. in the light of learning an innovative methodology of ‘Soft Operations Research’ for particular communities. It gave a new face to problem structuring and problem solving since the latter part of Soft-OR requires standalone skills which can translate into a productive method for qualitative researchers.

Approaching the last two days of FDP made it apparent that what ultimately works for the hard-work and success of high-achievers is their psyche. Thus, the research journey of Dr. Guneet Inder Jit Kaur provided a much needed self-belief for participants, including us, to keep their spirits high and start the research process from problem statement to sample collection to its analysis, keeping all practical constraints in mind. What synced very well with the present constraint of the pandemic was the topic of the next session by Manjesh Rana elaborating on how doing field study adhering to physical distancing norms is the new rule for investigators. It made the proverb of ‘turning adversity into opportunity’ a reality, when we spoke about the sampling methods in a pandemic. Rahul Verma’s session showcased a way forward



in generating our own robust dataset with the help of existing information as well as with primary data collection.

The FDP thus helped us in generating ideas for how to reflect on the constraints and to account for road-blocks while planning our study. Organising such events on a frequent basis can provide a platform for live scientific research complementing what the scholars read in academic journals, books and conferences. We would like to extend heartfelt thanks to JAIN University, especially the conveners for giving us the opportunity to become a part of this FDP.

Report by

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